

Major General Alfred Pleasonton, USA



Alfred Pleasonton was born in July 1824 in the District of Columbia. He attended the U.S. Military Academy, graduating in 1844 near the top of his class. He served honorably in the Mexican War and was involved in Indian fighting along the frontier. In August 1861 he was transferred to the U.S. Cavalry. He rose rapidly in rank and had been promoted to brigadier general by July 1862. Pleasonton and his brigade fought at South Mountain and Antietam in Maryland and at Fredericksburg, Virginia and he led a cavalry corps at Chancellorsville, Virginia. He was instrumental in reorganizing the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps and directed operations at the largest cavalry battle of the Civil War at Brandy Station in 1863. On June 22, 1863 he was appointed major general. Pleasonton moved west, to command horse soldiers under William S. Rosecrans in the Department of the Missouri, in March 1864. Repulsing Confederate General Sterling Price's raid in Missouri, Pleasonton pursued the Confederates into Kansas, virtually demolishing Price's cavalry. Pleasonton remained in the military after the war ended, but retired in 1868. He went on to work briefly for the Internal Revenue Service before becoming president of a railroad. He died in February 1897 at the age of 73.



Major General J.E.B. Stuart, CSA

Major General James Ewell Brown Stuart was born in Patrick County, Virginia in February 1833. He attended Emory and Henry College for two years before enrolling at West Point. Stuart graduated from the military academy in 1854 and spent most of the next six years with the U.S. Cavalry on the Kansas frontier. In 1861 he accepted a commission as a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia infantry, becoming a colonel in the Confederate cavalry only two weeks later. His bravery in leading a charge at First Manassas led to his promotion to brigadier general in September 1861 at the age of 28. During the Peninsula Campaign, Stuart made his first daring ride around an enemy army, enhancing his reputation as a dashing cavalier. After the Seven Days Battles, Stuart was promoted to major general in July 1862 and given command over all cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia in time for the Second Manassas Campaign. At Chancellorsville, he temporarily commanded the II Corps when Stonewall Jackson and A.P. Hill were both wounded. Surprised by Federal cavalry at the Battle of Brandy Station, Stuart ill-advisedly tried to polish his reputation with another ride around the Union army during the Gettysburg Campaign. After returning to Virginia, Stuart and his cavalry were invaluable to Lee at Wilderness and Spotsylvania. In May 1864, J.E.B. Stuart died in combat with Federal cavalry at Yellow Tavern in Virginia. He was 31 years old.

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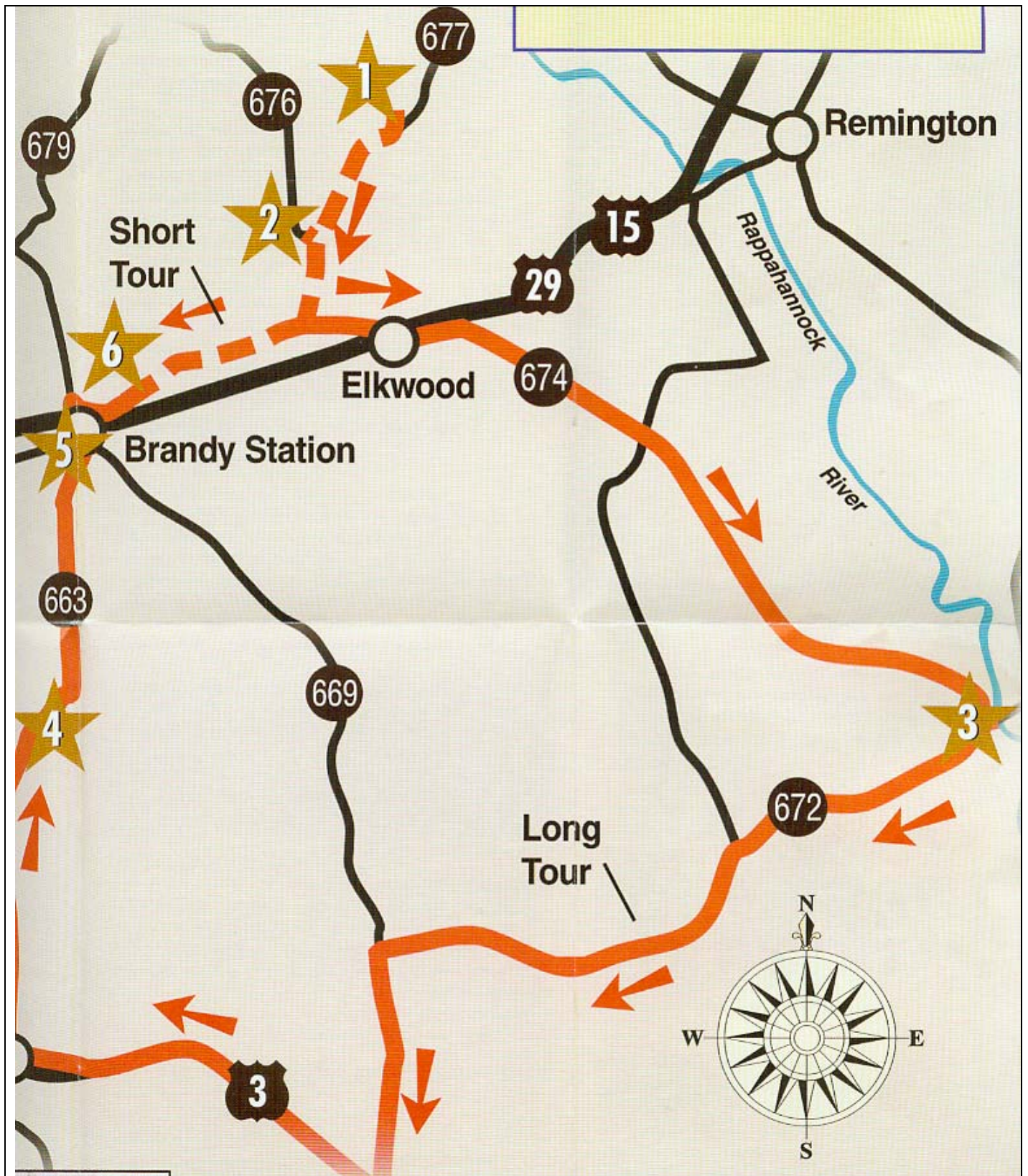
BATTLE OF Brandy Station *Driving Tour*

Short Tour Route

Long Tour Route



Tour Stops



The Battle of Brandy Station

First Clash in the Gettysburg Campaign -- June 9, 1863

Setting the Stage

As the third summer of the Civil War neared, the cavalries of the great armies in Virginia knew that more long marches and hard fighting lay ahead. So did Major General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker, whose Union Army of the Potomac had met defeat at Chancellorsville in early May, 1863. So too did his adversary, General Robert E. Lee, who had resolved to try another risky invasion of the North in his search for decisive victory.

The plans of Hooker and Lee would bring about the Battle of Brandy Station – or Fleetwood, as the Confederates called it – the largest cavalry combat of the war, and the largest ever in the Western Hemisphere. But two clashes earlier that year set the stage for Brandy Station. The spirited contest at Kelly's Ford on March 17 saw a Federal cavalry division pitch into a Confederate brigade and fight them to a draw. During the Chancellorsville operations, Fighting Joe sent most of his newly formed Cavalry Corps, commanded by General George Stoneman, into the region between Lee's army and Richmond. The expedition accomplished little. It wore out so many Federal horses that the Blue cavalry at Brandy Station numbered only 8,800, some thirteen percent less than Stoneman led. The skirmish at Kelly's Ford and Stoneman's Raid had, however, boosted the morale and confidence of the Union troopers.

In late May and early June, Hooker began to suspect that Confederate cavalier J.E.B. Stuart was planning a raid past the Federal right into northern Virginia. He received numerous reports that the Gray horsemen were massing in the lush grazing grounds of Culpeper County – a place that had been a springboard for Confederate offensives before. Stuart raiding northward might embarrass the Federals again; or Stuart's cavalry might be the vanguard of Lee's whole force, a much more serious threat. Hooker had enough confidence in his own horsemen, led now by General Alfred Pleasonton, to strike first at the Rebels across the Rappahannock. He ordered Pleasonton "to disperse and destroy the rebel force" gathering around the town of Culpeper.

Moving into Position

Hooker instructed Pleasonton to cross the Rappahannock River at both Beverly Ford and at Kelly's Ford, six miles apart. His three divisions of cavalry would be reinforced by two *ad hoc* brigades of infantry. In addition, an infantry brigade from the Fifth Corps would guard the rear of one of the columns. By 1863, cavalrymen knew they could not successfully charge rifle-armed infantry. The infantry brigades accompanying Pleasonton's cavalry would act as an insurance policy, giving them strong barriers behind which they could rally, or providing unshakable bridgeheads at the river crossings. If the infantry could keep up, they might even assist the cavalry in attacks. The foray depended on speed and secrecy. Pleasonton assured Hooker that he would cross the river at dawn, before the Confederates – ten miles away in Culpeper – became alert to their danger.

Pleasonton split his command in half. General John Buford would take his own First Division and the Reserve Brigade across at Beverly Ford. This column would include horse artillery, General Adelbert Ames' brigade of footsloggers, and Pleasonton himself. This wing comprised about 4,300 cavalry, 1,500 infantry, and 16 guns. At Kelly's Ford, General David McMurtre Gregg would cross at the same hour with 4,500 cavalry, 1,500 infantry, and 18 guns. Gregg would temporarily command his own Third Cavalry Division, Colonel Alfred Duffié's Second Cavalry Division, and David Russell's brigade of infantry. Pleasonton told Gregg to link up with Buford at Brandy Station, five miles from Culpeper. The combined command would then advance against Stuart. Gregg was also told to send "at least a regiment" to Stevensburg to guard the flank of the operation. The crossing and reassembly of the Cavalry Corps on June 9 was precisely planned, and might have worked if the Union commanders had executed it properly and if the Confederates had really been in Culpeper.

In fact, Stuart had planted his headquarters the evening of June 8 on Fleetwood Hill, only three miles from the river. His cavalry division, fresh from a grand review that day, was larger than any previous force of Confederate cavalry. It was confident, eager to begin the campaign, and set to cross the river, mainly at Beverly Ford, on the morning of June 9. Within a ten-mile radius, Stuart had spread out his five brigades: some 9,700 men and 20 cannon. Near Culpeper, the main body of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia – two corps led by James Longstreet and Richard Ewell – was now encamped. Lee would soon order A.P. Hill to march his corps west from Fredericksburg to Culpeper.

The Driving Tour

There are two ways to tour the Brandy Station battlefield. The long tour covers approximately 34 miles and takes a minimum of 4 hours to drive the route. The short route covers about 6 miles and takes about 2 hours. Both routes begin with the same two stops. The difference is that the long route goes to Kelly's Ford and follows Duffie's men to Hansborough Ridge. Please watch for traffic and be respectful of private property at each stop. Note: there are no restrooms on the battlefield, but the nearby Town of Culpeper offers a wonderful museum and restaurants with facilities where you may wish to stop with your family.

Directions to the Brandy Station battlefield: From Route 29, turn north (right if you're coming from Washington, D.C., left if you're coming from Culpeper) at the traffic light onto State Route 676 (Beverly Ford Road). Pass the first parking area for Brandy Station battlefield on your left and the T.I. Martin Airport on your right. Turn left when you see the second Brandy Station Battlefield sign.

1. Beverly Ford and Buford's Knoll: The Battle Begins

The Beverly Ford Road ends about a mile north of us. Beyond the end of the road about 700 yards is the old ford. Located on private property, long disused, and mainly washed away, it cannot be seen by the modern visitor. But imagine the scene the morning of June 9, 1863: The sound of sabers being drawn out of steel scabbards, the mad splashing of the horses as the vanguard of the 8th New York Cavalry crosses the misty 20 yards of water, the shouting of attackers and defenders, the crack of pistols and carbines. The largest cavalry battle in the

Civil War began there and spread down the Beverly Ford Road towards our position.

The woods behind us – which in 1863 extended about another half-mile towards the ford – held the camp of four batteries



After bearing of the fighting near Beverly Ford, Stuart pulls on his boots.

of Stuart's horse artillery. Their new commander, Major Robert Beckham, was a native of this county. It was a vulnerable position; only cavalry vedettes (sentries) lay between them and the river crossing.

William "Grumble" Jones's Virginia cavalry brigade was camped a half-mile back, near St. James Church. Wade Hampton's brigade of Mississippians, Georgians, and men from North and South Carolina was near Stevensburg. W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee's Virginians lay near Welford's Ford on the Hazel River. Fitzhugh Lee's brigade of Virginians, temporarily commanded by Thomas Munford, was near Oak Shade Church, north of Welford's Ford. Beverly Robinson's North Carolinians were at the Botts Plantation, three miles west of Stuart's headquarters on Fleetwood Hill. Pleasanton undoubtedly was shocked to find how soon he met Confederates in force.

Still, the Federals forced their way across the river and pushed the surprised Confederates back along the Beverly Ford Road to the area near St. James Church (the next stop on the tour.) Near a bend in the road, Union Colonel Benjamin "Grimes" Davis, commander of Buford's lead brigade, was killed. Unable to break through the Confederate line near the church, Buford swung his Yankees north and west in an effort to turn the Confederate left flank. The Rebels took position at a stone wall not far from here and held for several hours before pulling back.

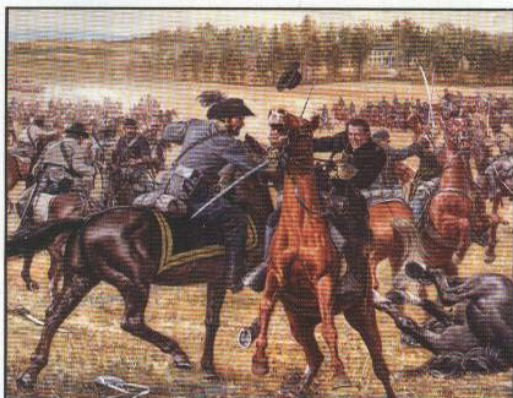
The mile-long path from the parking area leads to several exhibits on Buford's Knoll that relate to the events described below. The path connects to a farm lane, but do not drive down this road, because there is nowhere to turn around and it passes over a bridge that is not strong enough to hold your vehicle! The path gets steep, so please be careful, but the view is excellent. On the western horizon is Yew Ridge. To the north are the Blue Ridge Mountains. Passes in them would permit Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to gain the Shenandoah Valley on its long march towards Gettysburg.

Originally, troops of Buford's Reserve Brigade held the stone wall that divided the Green and Cunningham farms west of the rise that is known today as Buford's Knoll. But Rooney Lee's aggressive tactics pushed the Federals back, and the wall became a barrier to Buford's westward advance. The wall behind which Rooney Lee placed his 1,200 dismounted troopers extended from Ruffans Run to the Hazel River. Just behind the wall is a little hill behind which Lee stationed the horses of his command, as well as two pieces of Confederate horse artillery. These well-protected guns used indirect fire to shoot over both the hill and the heads of the Southern cavalymen at the wall. The plunging shells were imprecise but very annoying to Buford's soldiers.

The Federals had about ten pieces of artillery here and a small contingent of infantry to support them. About a hundred of these infantry, from the Third Wisconsin and Second Massachusetts

Infantries, finally pried the Confederates from the wall at about 10:30 in the morning. It was now up to the Union cavalry to

press Rooney Lee's troopers back to Yew Ridge and onto the northern end of Fleetwood Hill. Lee fought a stubborn withdrawal. Buford's exhausted horses and men, and the appearance of a fresh



Confederate troops put a stubborn resistance after being pushed back to Yew Ridge. Here "Rooney" Lee, son of the army commander, duels with Captain Wesley Merritt of the 2nd United States Cavalry.

Confederate brigade under Munford, convinced him to fall back to Beverly Ford late in the afternoon.

Directions to Stop 2, St. James Church area: Leave the parking area and turn right onto the Beverly Ford Road. Follow it past the airport until you reach the Brandy Station battlefield parking area and exhibits on the right.

2. St. James Church:

The Heart of the Battlefield

You are now at the heart of the Brandy Station battlefield. Face towards Beverly Ford. The present tree line two hundred yards to the north is about where it was during the battle, but the woods extended eastward across what is now the Culpeper County airport. When the battle began, William E. "Grumble" Jones' brigade of Virginia cavalry was camped on this site. By 7 a.m., when Buford had established a battle line along the edge of the woods, facing you, he was opposed by an equal number of Confederates here along the St. James Church and Green's Mill Roads. The Gee house sat on the small hill to your right. To its right was a four-gun battery of Confederate horse artillery and Wade Hampton's 1,600-man brigade. To its left, lined up westward from here to the copse that held St. James Church and from there north to Ruffans Run, were the 3,000 men of Jones' brigade (less about 800 horse holders). On the small plateau directly in front of you were twelve cannon of Stuart's horse artillery. These guns were trained on the Green's Mill Road, the Beverly Ford Road, the open ground in between, and the woods.

Stuart would use these men aggressively through the morning. At times his cavalymen put strong pressure on the Yankee cavalry and infantry in the woods. Hampton's troops also threatened to work around the Federal left flank. But in the late morning, after several hours of fighting here, Stuart was obliged to withdraw his men to Fleetwood Hill. Another Union division had just emerged from the town of Brandy Station – behind the Confederates!

The walking trail across the road (the St. James Church Road) will take you to another site of intense cavalry fighting. In addition, there are interpretive signs about the Union encampments that were here during the following winter (1863-1864.)

Six months after the Battle of Brandy Station, this area was the center of the huge encampment of the Army of the Potomac. Log huts, muddy roads, soldiers, cannon, horses, mules, and wagons dramatically changed the landscape. The soldiers cut most of the trees for shelters for men and beasts, for fuel, and for road improvements. Troops in these camps that winter knew boredom, dis-



The 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry in winter camp at Brandy Station, 1864.

ease, constant drilling, sad thoughts of home and fallen friends, comradeship and sometimes laughter, dread of the coming campaign, and an abiding hope for peace. This city of soldiers was

large but temporary. The log huts and the crude roads quickly disappeared after the great army tramped away in the spring.

You may now choose to continue on to Kelly's Ford (Stop 3) for the long tour, or go directly to Fleetwood Hill (Stop 6) for the shorter tour route.

Directions to Stop 3, Kelly's Ford: Turn right onto Beverly Ford Road from the parking area and go back to Route 29/15. At the intersection, on your right, is a monument to "The Gallant Pelbam." John Pelbam, commander of Stuart's horse artillery, was killed at the battle of Kelly's Ford, March 17, 1863.

Turn left onto Route 29 and get in the right lane immediately. The turnoff to Kelly's Ford is just one-eighth of a mile on your right.

Turn right onto the Kelly's Ford Road (Route 674) and follow it for 4.5 miles. Until this road turns east at the Norman's Ford Road, you are on the old Carolina Road; a famous colonial route at one time nicknamed the Rogue's Road because it was infested by bandits. Continue however on Rt. 674 towards Kelly's Ford. In 1.8 miles on your right, lies "Level Green," the privately owned Brannin House. The March 1863 Battle of Kelly's Ford, which began at the ford proper, became a running fight that swirled past this structure which was built the same year the U.S. Constitution was born. Confederate General Beverly Robinson first saw Union troops advancing north towards Brandy Station on June 9, 1863 about here. Six-tenths of a mile farther along, a parking area and trail on the left leads to the site where Pelham was mortally wounded. In less than a mile, you will reach the modern Kelly's Ford bridge.

Turn left off Route 674 then immediately right (before crossing the bridge) for the parking area. Park by the Virginia Civil War Trails sign, which describes the Battle of Kelly's Ford.

3. Kelly's Ford: The Other Federal Column

At Kelly's Ford, the second wing of Pleasonton's Federals, led by General David McMurtree Gregg, crossed the Rappahannock. Gregg was ordered to link up with Buford at Brandy Station before advancing against Stuart, whom the Union command believed to be near Culpeper. Gregg was also told to send men to Stevensburg. Gregg easily brushed aside Beverly Robertson's Confederate cavalry outpost stationed here. But because Duffié's division arrived late and was supposed to cross first, Gregg's men did not finish crossing until about 9 a.m. Gregg sent Russell's infantry against Robinson's troopers while he took his own division and Duffié's westward towards Stevensburg.

The small settlement of Kellysville, centered on a prosperous mill, was this side of the modern river crossing. The millrace is still visible near the bridge. The hamlet was destroyed during the Civil War.

Directions to Stop 4, Hansborough Ridge: Go back to Route 674 and turn left. Keep to the right when the road forks and turn onto the Stone's Mill Road (Route 672). In two miles you will cross Mountain Run at the site of Paoli's Mill. Mountain Run was a major obstacle to the movement of men, animals and wagons. Fords were important military assets. Continue driving. In 1.7 miles, you

will see the abandoned roadbed for the Fredericksburg Plank Road on your right. This road, leading across Stoney Ford on Mountain Run, was the route Gregg took with his division towards the town of Brandy Station. The rear of Gregg's column was protected during the battle by a Fifth Corps brigade of infantry under Colonel Jacob B. Sweitzer which followed him over Kelly's Ford and took position near here. Since the road taken by Gregg is no longer used, you will stay on 672, following the route of Duffié's column towards Stevensburg.

In just under a mile, turn left on Carrico Mills Road (Route 669). The old road that Duffié took directly ahead no longer exists; we must detour a bit. (If you have time, turn right – north – on 669 instead of left and drive to the Civil War-era Carrico Mill – it's not part of the tour, but it's very picturesque.) Continuing on the tour, drive south on Carrico Mills road until you reach the historic Germanna Turnpike (Route 5).

Turn right. In 1.4 miles the road cuts through Hansborough Ridge at the location of the confrontation between Duffié and two regiments of Confederate cavalry who attempted to block the road to Stevensburg. Turn right onto Route 600, the old Kirtley's Rolling Road and the main thoroughfare through Stevensburg. In the center of town, turn right onto Route 663, which takes you to Brandy Station in about 5 miles.

Just after you cross Mountain Run at the old site of Norman's Mill, turn right into the site commemorating Confederate scout Captain Will Farley, who was mortally wounded here.

4. Hansborough Ridge: Duffié Turns Back

Duffié had been ordered to reconnoiter Stevensburg, but first he had to remove 220 South Carolinians and a regiment of Virginians from his path. The forces skirmished at the gap in Hansborough Ridge through which you have just traveled. Hansborough Ridge and its extension, Cole's Hill, lie a mile east of this spot. After forcing the Confederates back, Duffié backtracked to approach Brandy Station from the south, as his new orders directed. As a result, he was too late to join the Union struggle for Fleetwood Hill.

Hansborough Ridge and Cole's Hill, 2.5 miles long, hosted many camps of the Second Army Corps of General Winfield S. Hancock during the winter of 1863-64. Camps were situated whenever possible on hills to provide natural drainage for snow and rain. Before leaving its camps in early May 1864, the Second Corps comprised over 30,000 men.

Directions to Stop 5, Brandy Station: Turn right, back onto Route 663. Unlike Duffié, we will press onward to enter Brandy

Station from the south. (Notice how close we are – and Duffié was – to Brandy Station and Fleetwood Hill.) Once you reach the town of Brandy Station, turn left on the Carrico Mills Road. Cross the railroad tracks and turn right immediately. On your right is the “Grafitti House,” a Civil War-era house that is now the headquarters of the Brandy Station Foundation. This is our next stop.

5. Brandy Station: Railroad Depot

The small village of Brandy Station gave its name to the largest cavalry battle in the Western hemisphere. It was the pivot point of the swirling fight, but there was no combat in the town itself. Brandy Station was also important in the winter of 1863 – 1864 as a supply depot for the encampment of the Army of the Potomac.

Directions to Stop 6, Fleetwood Hill (From Stop 5, long route): Turn around and go west for a short distance on the Brandy Station Road. Turn right onto Alantbus Road (Route 665). Cross Route 29/15. Soon turn right onto the Fleetwood Heights Road (Route 685, the Carolina Road again). A half-mile on the right on the right, pull in for our last set of signs: the culmination of the battle.

Directions to Stop 6, Fleetwood Hill (From Stop 2, short route): As you head south on Beverly Ford Road (Route 676) make a right turn onto Cobb’s Legion Lane. Make another right onto Fleetwood Heights Road (Route 685, the old colonial Carolina Road.) You will begin to climb Fleetwood Hill in .7 mile, but before you reach the crest look out upon the pasture on the right. This was the site of the sprawling winter headquarters of General George G. Meade, Commander of the Army of the Potomac in the winter of 1863 - 64. At the crest is a monument to the battle of Brandy Station that the United Daughters of the Confederacy installed in 1926. Travel another half-mile down the road and turn left into our last exhibit area.

6. Fleetwood Hill: The Battle Ends

Culpeper County provided an ideal landscape for cavalry maneuvers and combats. Marauding armies had removed most of the fences (and livestock); and grassy rolling fields were common. Brandy Station gave its name to four clashes of cavalry in the vicinity. The high ridge of Fleetwood Heights and its extension, Yew Ridge, stretch three miles roughly north to south. They were the key element of the local military landscape. Here on the slopes and crest of Fleetwood was played out “a passage of arms filled with romantic interest and splendor to a degree unequaled by anything our war produced.” So said a Confeder-

ate officer who was there.

While Buford’s men occupied Stuart and Rooney Lee near Beverly Ford, St. James Church, and the stone wall, the main portion of David McMurtrie Gregg’s Federal column crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly’s Ford and approached the Confederate rear. Gregg’s men (less Alfred Duffié’s division, which was skirmishing on Hansborough Ridge) arrived at Fleetwood Hill just after 11 a.m. and tried to take the heights.

Gregg’s failure to capture the southern end of Fleetwood Hill is understandable. His cavalrymen fought hard but without aid from Buford’s command or Duffié’. Gregg’s division found itself outnumbered two to one. While never involved in the combat – and never spotted by Pleasanton’s soldiers – Confederate infantry of Rhodes’ division had marched to within a few miles of Fleetwood Hill during the engagement.

Across the road to the north, several hundred yards away, is the privately owned “Beauregard” mansion. Identified on Civil War maps as the Barbour House, it was visited by General Robert E. Lee during the last stages of the great cavalry battle.

The Union cavalry had made a good showing at the Battle of Brandy Station, surprising Stuart twice and showing unexpected grit. But the horsemen in gray won. They held the field of battle, forced their opponents to retire, and – most important – hid the infantry of the Army of Northern Virginia from Federal eyes. As the cavalrymen recovered from the battle, Longstreet and Ewell set out unmolested from Culpeper for the Shenandoah Valley, on their way to Gettysburg.



CWPT would like to thank Dr. Beattie, Clark “Bud” Hall, and all the members of our Advisory Board who were instrumental in reviewing the text for this brochure and for the wayside signs on the battlefield.